**CPRS MEMBERS’ LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Introduction: As California continues to evolve into a more ethnically diverse state, the need for individuals employed in the parks and recreation profession who are bilingual or multilingual is paramount. Employees’ who speak more than one language results in improved customer service, higher quality management skills, and a reduction of communication barriers (Leslie & Russell, 2006). The California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) as a portion of its VIP Action Plan pursues two mission areas that support the need for employees who are bi- or multilingual: (a) “providing recreational experiences for individuals, families and communities,” and (b) “increasing cultural unity” (VIP Project, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to assess the foreign language proficiency motivations and opinions among individuals employed in the parks and recreation profession.

Method: An online survey was sent to 1,405 members of CPRS in April 2011. The questionnaire measured motivation to learn a foreign language, opinions regarding the need for foreign language proficiency, and frequency of foreign language usage. One hundred and eighty five subjects completed the survey.

Results: The majority of the subjects did not possess a foreign language skill. Most subjects who did possess a foreign language skill spoke Spanish. The highest rated motivation items on a 4-point Likert agreement scale were personal achievement (3.02), proficiency in a non-English language (3.00), to communicate with non-English speakers (2.93) and new knowledge (2.90). In response to the need for foreign language proficiency in the profession, also measured with a 4-point Likert scale, the highest rated items were possession of some foreign language vocabulary (2.85), knowledge of 5-10 common words (2.78), need for Spanish skills (2.44), and the need for conversational skills (2.31).

Discussion: The study results support previous literature that indicates individuals are motivated to achieve foreign language proficiency for intrinsic reasons (Seelye & Day, 1992). Ratings of the need for possession of foreign language proficiency is below a level of “agree” by the subjects. Because many of the subjects are at the supervisor and director levels, and their average age is in the mid-40s they may not have direct contact with employees and program participants who do not speak English as a first language. Additional research should be conducted with employees who are in direct contact with program participants. Furthermore, participation rates in municipal parks and recreation programs by community members that do not possess English as a first language should be compared with these results to determine if community specific needs exist relating to employee foreign language proficiency. CPRS should consider offering webinars or basic Spanish skills as professional development for its members.